

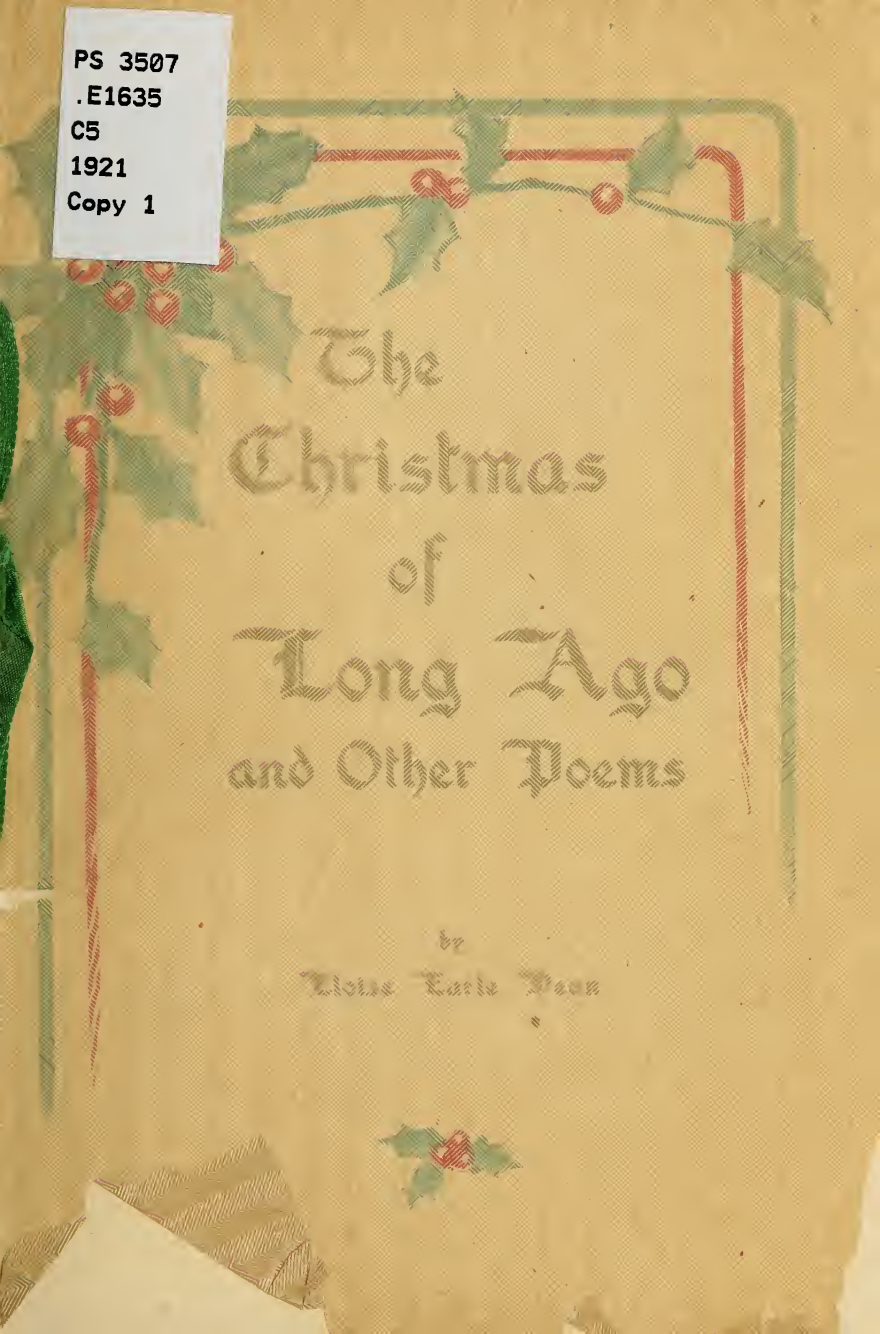
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The
Christmas
of
Long Ago
and Other Poems

by
Alice Earle Dean





The Christmas of Long Ago
And Other Poems

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BY
ELOISE EARLE DEAN

Atlanta, Incey printing company.
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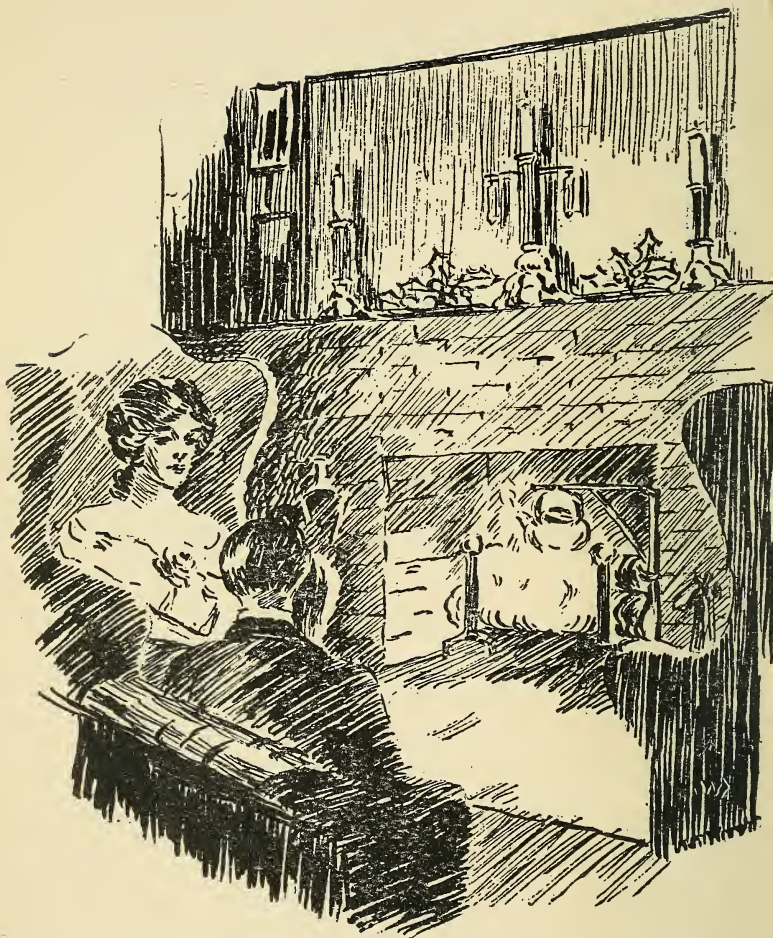
Again I see as in days of old.

Eyes bright and blue with sparkling wit

And hair of burnished gold.

My mother's fair, fair face.

To my mother.



CHRISTMAS OF LONG AGO

THE CHRISTMAS OF LONG AGO

Oh, the rhymes and chimes and merry times
Of the Christmas of long ago,
When oak logs crackled on the broad hearth
And the fields were mantled with snow.

The walls festooned with holly and vine
And berries melting red,
While mistletoe hung in waxlike green
From the chandelier overhead.

The board was laid with damask rare,
The candles with prisms shone,
And rippling voices of children played
With the treble of age now gone.

In quadrille and Virginia reel
Fiddling Ned swayed to and fro,
And couples true to their warm, young blood
Drifted under the mistletoe.

With waspy waists and dainty feet,
In trailing brocade they go,
Like graceful vines at the blooming time,
Tripping the lightsome toe.

Oh, the world is running away to-day,—
See the crimson life stream flow,—
My heart turns back with a holy peace
To the Christmas of long ago.

THE MESSAGE

The crescent moon by a lone star
In a sea of ultra-marine,
Holds my eye like a magnet
Though street crowds surge between;
Oh, more than moon or evening star,
'Tis shepherds that I see
Listening to a thousand harps
In spellbound ecstasy.
The little town of Bethlehem
Slumbering in peaceful rest,
The new born babe in swaddling clothes
Close by His mother's breast;
Thrust forth your rays like spears of fire,
Show men Golgotha's tree,
Gethsemane, the crown of thorns;
Shine, shine for Calvary!

A SONNET

The favored son who dreamed of greatness won,
Of heavy sheaves low bowing 'neath the sky,
The silent moon and stars and radiant sun
To do obeisance everlastingly;
His motley coat of costly fabric rare,
But stirred his brothers' wrath—to fury fanned
For they in him could nothing see that's fair
And evil-eyed that day his downfall planned.
A captive in a foreign land alone,
His spirit soared and knew no prison wall;
The nation tottered—famine sought the throne,
Prepared of God, he heard his people call
And swung the weight of empires dead to find;
The vision and the spirit rule mankind!

THE INDIAN'S GRAVE

The tall oak trees with heavy umber trunks
Cast patterns on the mould;
The mellow cooing of a dove far off,—
A frisky squirrel fluttering through the leaves;
I stood enthralled, smitten to the heart
With the ravishing beauty of it all;
And as I stood my eyes wandered afar,
And fixed on something bare and red,—
A mound of clay banked up severe and hard.
All through the years no grass nor flower had grown
To mark the resting of a gallant son.
The hunters missed this one,—
It was intact. A chief no doubt,—
For even graves do speak of their own dead.
Wealth lies beneath the clayey dome,—
But no—I will not tell.
Sleep sweetly on, thy treasures all lie unmolested by
thy side.
I will cover thee with cast-off boughs
Like a brush-heap, I will hide
My treasure, No alien foot shall
Trespass here; for I will buy
The field wherein it lies.

INSPIRATION

My spirit rides the waves to-day
And mounts the white caps high,
In childish glee slips through the spray
And leaps up to the sky;
My spirit rides the waves to-day
And sips eternity!

'OLE MARSE

“Put on de skillet an’ put on de led,
I’ze gwine er cook some shortnin’ bread—”
Hush dat nigger,—whut ole marse sed?
He’s comin’ down heer caze I done hed
Er feelin in ma bones. He ain’t ’er gwine
Hu’t nobody, he nebber do, yer mine
Dem black eyes ob his’n, shoo-oo-oo!
Dey looks yer thu and thu!
An’ when he gits angry dey moves uprike,
Jis’ lak er sarpint ready to strak,
An’ den I sizzles an’ wivvers wid fright,
Same es er tree dat’s hed de blite,
I feels myself jis’ skin an’ bone
Rattlin’ in de night win’ all alone.
“Put on de skillet an’ put on de led,
I’ze gwine er cook some shortnin’ bread—”
Sh! I done tole yer now, hard head,
Shut up ’bout dat skillet an’ led,—
Whut ail yer nigger? yer ain’t ’spect folks
Runnin’ on wid song an’ jokes.
Wid me hit’s diff’en don’ yer see,
Caze marse an’ missis dey rais’ me;
I slep’ right dar by Miss Georgiann
An’ when she wake, right dar I stan’,

She say: "Git me some water mammy please,
 Ma froat am dry an' dat 'ar breeze
 Frum de Norf so stiff I shivers,
 Close de winder an' pull up de kivvers,
 I'ze sorry I wake yer, mammy;"—
 An' she wuz de born image ob Marse Sammy.
 'En Miss Georgiann wuz a babe, her foot so small,
 I tuk de hul foot in ma mouf, heel an' all,
 Caze I hes er mighty 'daptable mouf;
 Ole marse he laf an' say, "On ma loife
 Cindy, youze cas' er spell ober dat chile,"
 Caze she aint whimper all de while
 I nuss her 'cep she's hongry or colic or sompin',
 An' she grow up putty sho' an' sich rompin,'—
 "I'ze gwine er cook some shortnin' bread,
 Ma dona lubs shortnin' bread,—"
 Youze gwine git us in trouble treckly z'I sed,
 Good Lawd nigger! 'dars marse comin' 'round by
 de shed.
 Hes necktie stringin' on hes white shirt front,
 Hes coat tails er flyin' an' dat 'normus grunt,
 De ain't many folks sez es much in er day
 Es when he rais' hissef an' "'Ugh um," dat way.
 Hes hat res' dar on hes haid dat high,
 I'ze min ob de chu'ch steeple strainin' ter de sky;

He'z gittin' ole now an' hes ha'r so white,
Lak ole miss silber, thin curls blowin' light;
But dar ain't nobody eber git de bes' ob him
Wid dem long white han's an' him so slim,
"Put on de skillet an' put on de led,
I'ze gwine 'er cook some shortnin' bread,—"
Sh! dar he come, ben' yer haid low
Ober dat shattrin' cotton row,
Ain't yer got no manners? Ole miss train me,
Caze she wuz caishus es she could be,
He rule dis place an' dat am sho!
En' whut do a nigger wan' dat's mo'
Dan er good warm house an plenny ter eat,
De physic ef I'ze sick an' er comf'ble seat
Right ober marse an' missis in de chu'ch,
We wuz all dar—de debbil wuz in de lu'ch.
I ain't nebber fergit dem lessens ma chile,
When I nuss Miss Georgiann all de while;
Miss Georgiann marr'd an' gone dez yers,
Dat big sojer man, honey, scuze dez ters,
Things ain't lak dey use ter be,
But I lubs ma white folks an' dey lubs me.

RHODODENDRONS

(In New York)

The rhododendrons are blooming
In the old Maroony wood,
The cardinal and thrush are there,
Flaunting in rapturous mood.

The wind steals in my window,
Keen with the thoughts of home,
Where the rhododendron's blooming
And the farmer turns his loam.

Stone walls and streets reverberate,
My room is close and small;
Caged, caged! while thrushes try their notes
And rhododendrons call!

THE CHRYSALIS

My soul reposed in downy ease,
Yet not content was I,
But strove to push the walls away
And live ere I should die.

I walked in gardens drunk with flowers
And heard the nesting birds,
“ ‘Tis not for me, for me,” I cried,
“The music of their words.”

A cross rose against a lurid sky,
A cross I must bear alone,
And staggering I broke the seal,
Ah, then the sunlight shone!

THE PIGEON WING

When de meat is in de meat house
 An' de apples in de bin,
 An' de 'possum kotch an' fattenin'
 Er grinnin' mad es sin;
 Hit's den I hauls ma fiddle out
 An' twistes' up de string,
 An' calls out to Salina, come
 Le's cut de pigeon wing:
 Tee-te-ee-te, te-te-ee-te-ee,
 Tee-te-ee-te, te-ee-te-um,
 Tee-te-ee-te-um,
 Tee-te-ee-te-um.
 Fling dat skillet, fling hit high,
 Caze 'possum time es mighty nigh.
 Push dem cheers agin de wall,
 Open de doo' an' pack in all,
 I'ze got no licker, but I'ze got er smell
 Ob turk an' 'possum in de hall;
 Yance, yer rawboned scalawag,
 Step for'ard wid er swing,
 Kick up de dus' an' strak er spark
 An' swinge dat pigeon wing.
 Tee-te-ee-te, te-te-ee-te-ee, etc
 Spread out dar erbout de floo'
 Git right an' begin,
 Out dar Sam, yaller Jim an' Joe,
 Hit's er circus we gwine spin,
 Dere Salina, come step up swell,
 Don' yer slight yer pawt,
 Slam dem feets an' fris' erbout,
 Lawd, I ain't got no heawt:
 Tee-te-ee-te, te-te-ee-te-ee, etc.

DE MORNIN'S GITTIN' BY

Up so bright an early, lookin' at de sun,
Whar he rise in glory in de eastern sky;
But somehow er ruther de ain't much bin done,
An' she ez fait' de mornin's gittin' by.

Heap er things er comin' up frum heer an' dar,
Takes a pow'ful site er time,—he slips so sly,—
No matter whar yer cum frum, no matter whar yer are,
Ole time he's er fudgin' an' de mornin's gittin' by.

Watch out dar young folks lookin' at de sky,
Sho ez loife hits comin' bofe ter yer an' I;
Watch out fur de minites—diamonts in de sky,
En don furgit my honey, de mornin's gittin' by.

Soon be ole an' feeble, settin' by de fire,
Hands all a-tremble an' ain't feel so spry;
De misery gits yer in de side, an' feet dat ez so tire,
Sho, ez fait' de mornin's gittin' by.

THE SOUTH WIND.

(In New York)

The band swings round the corner
With blast of trump and drum,
A lusty southern medley
Holds the people as they come;
The air is full of messages
That thrill my soul to-night,
The dipping of a ceaseless oar,
The river at twilight.
Once more the lapping waters
Of the old Savannah play,
Once more the children gather
At the close of summer's day
In the cottage hung with woodbine,
Where lilacs blue and white
With jasmine and violets
Lend perfume to the night;
The dove croons o'er the valley
The whippoorwill's wierd note,
The mocker in the apple tree
Trilling; the crimson throat
Vies with the frogs chug, chugging,
In the pond by the pasture gate.
Hear the waters rushing, rushing,
From early morn till late
And the speckled trout so frisky
In the creek are nibbling bait;—
Oh, it's where the South wind's calling
My heart turns back again,
With a kindly thought of neighbors
And the preacher's great, amen!

VIOLETS

Flecked with red the clouds hung low,
In the cove where the dog tooth violets grow,
Banked in masses on the hill,
Streaming down to kiss the rill,
Mounting the crest where lost from view,
They blend with sky ethereal blue;
Now, they catch the rays of sun,
In myriad hues the dewdrops run,
While lavender and mauve anew
Like winged darts go stinging through
My heart; and in the morning air
Perfume filters everywhere!

COMPENSATION

There's a vista across the way from me,
 Though the field I may not buy,
That wrings my heart for words to hold
 The splendor passing by.

Stately, and tall, my sentinels,
 With trunks of Vandyke brown,
Long arms of feathery lace entwined,
 The red bank tumbled down:—

The sky blends yellow, gray and red
 As the disc leans and inclines,
Gold spears strike to the zenith
 Through a clump of long-leaf pines!

THE ALIEN

He stands beneath the eaves of a holy church,
A lonely figure with great wistful eyes
Tending his cart of parched peanuts and corn,
The taper burns, he shakes the yellow grains
That burst like snowflakes as they fall, each one
With flutings shaped. Often I loiter near
To purchase carelessly a little pack,
And long to speak a word or two of cheer
As silently he passes me a coin,—
Alas, he is a Greek and cannot speak
Our tongue or blend his dreary life with ours;
He stands apart and sees the crowd pass by
With jest and joke and close companionship.

ON THE HUDSON

The sun drooped low and tipped the Jersey hills,
Across the river lay a band of gold
Scintillating with rays of silver sheen,
The blue gray smoke rose tier on tier and veiled
The rugged hills in lavender and rose;
Expanding now the great ball softer grows
As wisps of mauve and carmine shade each line,—
A fold of gray floats lightly from the face
While resting in the fork prongs of the trees
The giant steadies, slings his mighty sword
Of flame and slips in silence down the abyss!

THE HORSESHOE GLEN

Come trip with me the Horseshoe Glen
Where fairies hold their ball,
And revel to the pipes of Pan
No thought of care or call.

Come where the rose and fern have wed.
And drink life full and free,
Come Love and dance with me
Until the reveille!

THE SUMMER ROSE

The rippling of the merry brook,
The tinkle of a soft guitar,
Your dulcet voice—the fading beams
Call me from afar.

The summer days are almost gone,
Have you trifled thus with me?
And plucked a rose to fade and die
For a moment's ecstasy?

A SONNET

We labor up the great stone steps to pray
And enter solemnly the family pew,
Where kneeling low in contrite heart to-day,
The service long and tedious go through;
The organ swells, soft chanting thrills the soul,
In mellow tones the ministers proclaim
With cross and covenant the way unfold,
And all in one accord worship His name.
The service ends, the music dies away,
Strange thoughts arise of stocks and bonds and
things;
To win the goal is life, who counts the way?
To fail is sin, see how the market swings.
Upon the street go plot and scheme with care,
Yea, forgetting God is everywhere!

THE MORNING LIGHT

The morning light is breaking
And spreading through the earth;
The clarion call is sounding,
The hour of the new birth.

Across from India calling,
Hear the soft strains come,
The weary world is moving,
She is swinging close to home.

The morning light is breaking,
Sin grapples hard to sway,
But Truth triumphant is marching,
Hail to the dawn of day!

SALLY ANN

“Run nigger run er de pattaro’ ’ll git yer,
Run nigger run fer hit’s a’mos’ day.”
I’ze been across de ’Rony woods
Ter see my Sally Ann,
She b’long ter dem folks ober dar
An’ dis I jis’ can’t stan’;
I sho’ is boun’ ter hab ’er, sho!
An’ she am willin,’ man,—
“Run nigger run er de pattaro’ ’ll git yer,
Run nigger run fer hit’s a’mos’ day.”

We’ze gwine hab er corn-shuckin’, ugh, hugh,
An’ ’vite ’em all ober den,
Caze I wants ole miss ter see her
An’ den de fun begin,
Ha, ha, ha, I boun’ ter wo’k hit thru,
Ole Miss laks me, git away,
She gwine fix hit right an’ dis I know,
I gits my Sally Ann ober ter stay.
Fling me de fiddle an’ fling me de bow,
Caze I’ze gwine git Sally Ann, Sally Ann, I know,—
“Run nigger run er de pattaro’ ’ll git yer,
Run nigger run fer hit’s a’mos’ day.”

CAROLINE

Oh Caroline, Sweet Caroline,
Come lissen ter ma song—don' pine;
Ma heawt strings beats de melody
Ob yer name de whole day long, honey.

(Soliloquy) Step lively dar yer dusky coon,
De dawgs es er barkin' an' dere ain't no moon;
Twang dat banjo mighty sly,
Caze yer wake ole Miss an' hit be goodbye.

Oh Caroline, sweet Caroline,
I'ze under de winder, love o'mine;
Open yer shutters jis' er peep
Ter let me know yer ain't er sleep.

I hes ter sing so pow'ful low,
Fear ob de dawgs an' Miss de mo'.
Dere's none dat haf so gran' an' fine,
Oh Caroline, sweet love o'mine.

Yer eyes is lak de glitt'rin stars,
An' yer voice am sof' lak music bars,—
Come tell me now, Oh Caroline
Wid er happy smile dat yer be mine,
Oh Caroline, sweet Caroline!

LOVE

Love flings her lines afar girdling the world
With chains of gold fast linking round about,
From crimson poppy fields to cherry blooms,
Close by the hoary dragon's lair she glides
And casts enchanting eye the Sphinx to win;
The pyramids yield up their magic store,
And all things give their best—their rarest gifts.
And deep is love as countless fathoms dark,
Still down to depths profound moving unheard;
Then soaring upward cleaves the utmost blue;
Orion and the Pleiades grow dim,
On, on to worlds remote unknown to man,
There is no bound for love, for love is God!

MY OWN

I can't tell just why I love you so ;
It seems to me there is no glow
 Of summer's sun or starlight gleam,
 But on that ray your face is seen ;—
I can't tell just why I love you so !

Your voice is whisperng cadence low,
Like babbling brook or zepthers blow,
 And oft I listen through the night
 With senses tense and heartstrings taut ;—
I can't tell just why I love you so !

THE WINDS

Galloping with stirrups and spurs sprung taut,
Down hill and corner steep,
The alley alive with screeches wild
As they lunge and whine and sweep.
Swish! steel hands scrape the side wall
And rattle the windows wet,
Howling down the turnpike gorge,
They charge and fight and fret,
Grappling some fierce antagonist
Deadly to beset;
Onward like mad down chasms dark,
Rumbling and thundering deep;
These unseen knights in armor flash
Lights over doubloons keep.

A TREE

It was a rough and rugged tree,
Wind scarred and knotty
With scrubby boughs and twisted twigs,
Hard favored hickory of the wood.

A luxurious vine clung to its boughs
With soft and curling tendrils,
Caressing fondly the warty trunk;
In clusters large and full,
The flowers sift their perfume down
Like vapor through the wood!

ILS NE PASSERONT PAS

Il^s ne passeront pas, resounded through the world,
Into the breach ten million men were hurled;—
Il^s ne passeront pas,—let despots quake with fear,
Greed and oppression throttled everywhere.

Il^s ne passeront pas,—right will prevail,
Free men! America! we must not fail;—
Il^s ne passeront pas,—redeem the cruel past,
Strike the shackles from the slave at last!

FREEDOM

Ay, free you are, yes free to live or die,
To serve or sin or waste your time in vain,
No mortal cares or asks the reason why
Some flounder in the mire, others attain.

A SONNET

Confucius strove with theories abstruse
To plan the lives of men that ran to waste,
And Buddha lifted high his scheme in truce
And laid the deep absolving of his caste,
Mohammed thrust his sword point in to gain
Worshipful adoration, temples, shrine,
The Shinto caught a ray across the main
And man the wretched victim no peace could find.
And when the groping world had madly sought
From prophet, philosopher and king, yea all
That knowledge could achieve was counted naught,
As it was foretold, their theories did fall:
The time was ripe, His star shone in the East
And wise men came to worship the Prince of Peace!



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